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# Survey for a Railroad

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

MARCH 17, 1886.—Referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations and ordered to be printed.

Mr. HOAR presented the following petition of John Arthur Lynch, for the survey of a line for a railway from the northwestern boundary of the United States through British Columbia to Alaska: *March 17, 1886*

THE PETITION OF JOHN ARTHUR LYNCH, A CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES.

*To the honorable Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled:*

Respectfully sheweth and submitted for the consideration of your honorable body the following project of a public work which would be of great benefit to the United States, viz:

The construction of a railroad from the northwestern boundary of the United States through British America and the Territory of Alaska to a harbor on the coast thereof, there to be connected by steamships with Japan, North China, and the Asiatic Russian possessions, and by a line of railroad projected to be thence constructed by the Imperial Government of Russia, having connections with the Empire of China and Japan and British India, and by the Central Asiatic Russian system of railways with the entire system of European railroads.

The Government of Russia having caused surveys to be made for a line of railroad through its Asiatic territory to the city of Pekin, in China, and to the Yellow Sea, as also through Siberia and Manchooria to Nicholofski, on the inner Japanese Sea:

It is therefore respectfully submitted to your honorable Congress that it would be a work worthy of the great commercial interests of the United States, in connection with her trade with the rest of the continent of America and with Asia, to cause a survey to be made having in view the construction of a railroad from the northern boundary of the United States through British Columbia to Alaska and a commodious harbor therein on the Alaskan Peninsula, such survey to be made under the direction of the Secretary of War.

The great object to be obtained by the construction of such a road would be the facility it would afford to citizens of the United States to proceed to the interior of that great and valuable territory for the purpose of settlement and developing its great mineral resources, and engaging in agriculture and stock raising and other resources for industry and the profitable employment of our rapidly increasing population, and also by opening, as it would, direct commercial intercourse with the vast population of Asia.

It is respectfully submitted that, having in view the great natural obstacles that have been surmounted in the construction of the Pacific railroads, the construction of this projected road can also be suc-

cessfully carried forward, in support of which statement your petitioner respectfully refers to the opinion of the late Professor Joseph Henry, the eminent scientist, as expressed in his letter of the 28th May, 1874, to your petitioner, a copy whereof is hereto annexed.

The project of constructing the road through British Columbia has been favorably entertained by two of the respective lieutenant-governors of that province, as appears by their letters addressed to your petitioner, copies whereof are hereto also annexed.

The attention of your honors is respectfully invited to the fact that the several Governments of South America are gradually extending their railroad systems towards the north, the Argentine Republic and the Republic of Chili being now connected by a transandean railroad, and a line has also been built to the boundary of Bolivia by the Argentine Government, and the Bolivian Government has granted concessions for the construction of a connecting line north across her territory. Brazil and Venezuela and the United States of Colombia have also made some progress in railroad building in the same direction; Monte Video is connected by railroad with Asuncion, in Paraguay, and the several states of Central America are making efforts to develop their resources in the same direction. And since your petitioner first presented this subject to the consideration of your honors on the 15th of February, 1877, by petition, the Republic of Mexico has opened her territory to American railroad enterprise, thus affording evidence that the entire continent will, ere many years elapse, be connected from north to south by one grand through line of railroad intercommunication, and thus, by the construction of this projected road from the United States to Alaska, the commerce of this entire continent with Asia overland would pass through the United States.

As evidence of the practicability and feasibility of the construction of said road to Alaska, your petitioner also respectfully refers to the accompanying extract from the opinion of Admiral Cochran, of the English Navy, appointed by the English Government as a member of a board of officers to select a terminal port on the Pacific for the Canadian Pacific Railroad, wherein he states that in course of time the terminus of said railroad will be on Behring Straits. Such evidence from an experienced naval officer of high rank in a foreign service, and therefore entirely disinterested as regards the developing of the interests of the United States territory, is deserving of every consideration.

It is therefore respectfully submitted to your honorable Congress that the preliminary surveys leading to these great objects should be commenced at as early a period as practicable.

JOHN ARTHUR LYNCH.

WASHINGTON, D. C., *March 15, 1886.*

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SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION,  
*Washington, D. C., May 28, 1874.*

DEAR SIR: The plan of connecting America and Europe, by a railway through Alaska and Siberia, is one of great magnificence and well worthy the attention of the statesmen and scientists of the world. Whatever tends to facilitate intercommunication of nations has an important bearing on the advance of civilization; nor, since the successful completion of the railway connecting New York and San Francisco, can your project be pronounced impossible. It is, however, an enterprise in which the co-operation of different nationalities is required, and for which the investment of a very large amount of capital is necessary.

Although the conception of such a project is worthy of approbation, still it is not sufficient. In order to bring the matter properly before the world, information must

be gathered as to the positive feasibility of the construction of the road, a plan of co-operation must be elaborated, and the means pointed out by which the requisite capital may be obtained.

A project of the kind of that in question requires time to grow in importance in the public mind, and for this purpose it is necessary that it be frequently agitated, and that individuals should devote themselves enthusiastically to the promotion of the work. It cannot be expected that success will be attained immediately, but what frequently appears at first as entirely chimerical is after a while received as of necessity and easy accomplishment.

I would therefore cheer you in your laudable intention of making this proposition the permanent object of your life, with the hope that in time the desired result will be accomplished, and your name be honorably associated with its history.

I am, very respectfully yours,

JOSEPH HENRY,  
*Secretary Smithsonian Institution.*

JOHN ARTHUR LYNCH, Esq.,  
*Washington, D. C.*

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR'S OFFICE,  
*British Columbia, July 12, 1875.*

SIR: The lieutenant-governor directs me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 21st ultimo, and its inclosure, upon the subject of the project you suggest for the construction of a railway from Washington Territory through British Columbia and Alaska to connect by steamers with the Russian possessions in Asia. I am to inform you that your suggestions will receive the consideration of the governor in council, especially as it refers to this province, and that a further communication will be addressed to you by the proper officer of this Government.

I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant,

G. RICHARD LAYTON,  
*Private Secretary.*

JOHN ARTHUR LYNCH, Esq.,  
*Washington, D. C., United States of America.*

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,  
*Victoria, B. C., March 15, 1884.*

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 1st of March, with its inclosure of the bill to facilitate the settlement, &c., of Alaska, &c. The road you propose to have made would be of great value to Alaska, and doubtless the Government of Canada and of the province of British Columbia would in every way in their power facilitate the carrying out of the work.

I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant,

CLEMENT I. CORNWALL,  
*Lieutenant-Governor, British Columbia.*

JOHN ARTHUR LYNCH, Esq.,  
*Washington, D. C., United States of America.*

Extract from the opinion of Admiral Cochran, of the English navy, as a member of a board of officers appointed by the British Government, to report upon the location of the Pacific terminus for the Canadian Pacific Railway.

I am of belief that the most advantageous site for the terminus is that of Burrard Inlet. When population has increased then the terminus will probably be transferred further to the northward, until, in my belief, it will eventually reach Behring Straits. \* \* \* The climate of Queen Charlotte Islands is tempered by ocean currents, is mild, and their resources from agriculture, mining, and fisheries will at no distant date be an element of wealth to the Canadian Government. On my visit to the port of Netlah Catlah, adjacent to Alaska, I found a large and flourishing settlement of Indians; the soil was fertile and productive, the fisheries were highly remunerative, and the general and prospective prosperity of the colony all that could be expected. I mention these facts with a view to show that the climate is not hostile to emigration to the northward. (See pages 297 *et seq.*, Report of the Canadian Pacific Railroad (official), 1877.)